APM from 1.4.98 in phases and according to the phasing, sourcing of crude oil will be liberalised and imports will be allowed for joint and private sector refineries under actual user licence.

Wood Based industries in North-East

*152. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased state:

(a) the number of wood based industries operating in the North-east region which have plundered the local forests to an astonishing degree;

(b) whether these factories are fostered by a caucus of politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen from plains; and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to shift those industries as per recommendations made by the Rajeshwar Committee and by when all these units are likely to be shifted?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ):(a) to (c) As per Reports of the State Governments, there are 1228 saw mills, 291 saw-cum-veneer mills and 77 plywood factories in North-East region, State of Forest Report, 1995 published by Forest Survey of India has revealed that during the period 1991—1993, forest cover in the North-Eastern States decreased by 783 sq. km.
Supreme Court in a public interest litigation have taken cognisance of such a decrease in forest cover and given the following interim directions on 12-12-96:

(i) All on-going non-forestry activities within any forest in any State throughout the country must ceased forthwith except without the prior approval of Central Government under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

(ii) Suspension, of felling of trees in all forests except in accordance with working plans of the State Governments approved by Central Government;

(iii) Complete ban on movement of cut trees and timber from any of the seven North-Eastern States to any other State of the country;

(iv) Complete ban on felling of any kind of trees in Tirap and Changlang Districts of Arunachal Pradesh and closure of all saw mills, veneer mills and plywood mills in Tirap and Changlang in Arunachal Pradesh and within a distance of 100 km. of its border in Assam.

(v) All State Governments to file a report regarding the number of saw mills, veneer and plywood mills actually operating within the State with particulars of their real ownership, the licensed and actual capacityies for stock and sawing, proximity to the nearest forests and source of limber.

The reports of the state Governments and recommendations of Rajeshwar Committee are under consideration of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

Filling up of Vacancies in Railways

*153. SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) sanctioned strength and the total number of vacancies in each department of railways grade-wise and railway-wise from the level of Assistant Officers grade to G.M. in all Zones/Units/RDSO/ Railway Board as on 31st March, 1997 including those filled on ad hoc basis; and

(b) the status of proposals to fill-up these vacancies and by when?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) and (b) A statement indicating the sanctioned strength of gazetted posts for all departments, grade-wise on the Indian Railways as on 1-1-97 is given in the